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From the Secretary of the Cabinet and Permanent Secretary to the Management and Personnel Office

Sir Robert Armstrong GCB CVO

Ref.A083/1890

29 June 1983

Dear Sir,

We spoke on the telephone this morning about the possibility that the Prime Minister may receive an unsolicited gift of a case of Ashbourne mineral water from the company concerned. I understand that one or two Cabinet Ministers have already received such a gift and it seems likely that similar gifts will be made to the rest of the Cabinet members.

Paragraphs 62-64 of Questions of Procedure for Ministers set out the guidance on acceptance of gifts and services. The general principle is that no Minister or public servant should accept gifts, hospitality or services from anyone which would, or may appear to, place him or her under an obligation. Although, as Questions of Procedure recognises, there may be circumstances in which it is difficult to refuse a gift (primarily from another Government or Government organisation) without the risk of discourtesy, the general rule is that gifts should be declined and the precedents show that this has been applied rigidly to gifts from commercial organisations and the only recognised exceptions are small gifts given to commemorate a visit or ceremony.

On this basis, we agreed that I should advise any Ministers who receive such an offer that it should be declined.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to all Cabinet Ministers.

Yours
R P Hatfield

(R P Hatfield)
Private Secretary

T J Flesher Esq